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City closes problem bar for three months

Conditions may be required before reopening is allowed

Edmonton, February 8, 2008 – The City has closed Smok'n Joe's bar (615 Hermitage Road) for three months, following a license review request by the Public Safety Compliance Team (PSCT).

The bar has a long problematic history with the surrounding community and the Edmonton Police including weapons complaints, violent activities and various bylaw infractions. "We made several recommendations to the owner to deal with these issues, but when it became clear things weren't improving, we took action," said Edmonton Police Sergeant Gary Godziuk, a member of the PSCT.

Representatives from Edmonton Fire Rescue Services, Edmonton Police, the City Bylaw unit, and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission make up the PSCT. The team works with bars and restaurants to improve the safety of staff and patrons, and reduce conflicts with surrounding neighborhoods.

"The City is serious about shutting down problem bars," says Mark Garrett, Manager of Development and Compliance for the City. This is the first time the City has issued such a suspension and it sets a precedent for other licensed establishments. "This shows how the team and the City can work together to make real positive change."

The owner of Smok'n Joe's now has 14 days to appeal the suspension. After the suspension is served, the City has the option of placing conditions on the license, which could include installing security cameras and mandatory weapons checks. "We will look at the recommendations of the PSCT before the license is reinstated," added Garrett.

Since the City started the PSCT they have visited over 400 licensed establishments educating owners on compliance and improved business practices. The majority of owners are happy to fix any problems identified by PSCT. "When an owner is not willing to make change, then we take measures to enforce," says Godziuk.

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THE CITY OF Edmonton